

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 OMB-01 SAM-01 /071 W

----- 105763

P 160259Z FEB 76

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5151

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0256

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJECT: STATUS OF HUA KUO-FENG; CRITICISM OF OTHER PRC LEADERS

1. SUMMARY: A MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL REPORTEDLY SAID ON FEBRUARY 13 THAT ACTING PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG HAD BEEN NOMINATED TO THE PREMIERSHIP AND WAS AWAITING CONFIRMATION--THUS IMPLYING HUA'S ASSUMPTION OF THE PREMIERSHIP TO BE PERMANENT, NO TEMPORARY. THE OFFICIAL REPORTEDLY ALSO CONFIRMED THAT TENG HSIAO-PING WAS STILL A VICE PREMIER, BUT COMMENTS BY CHANG CHUN-CHIAO AND THE MFA INFORMATION DEPARTMENT SOUNDED LIKE SLAPS AT TENG. THE POSTER CAMPAIGN HAS SPREAD TO SHANGHAI AND CHANGSHA WHERE SLOGANS ARE VISIBLE ON THE MAIN STREETS. THERE IS STILL NO SIGN OF POSTERS ON THE STREETS OF PEKING. END SUMMARY.

2. HUA KUO-FENG'S STATUS. DURING A FEBRUARY 13 MEETING WITH CHI TSUNG-HUA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE MFA'S WEST EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT AND FRENCH LANGUAGE INTERPRETER FOR CHAIRMAN MAO AND OTHER TOP PRC LEADERS, FRENCH AMBASSADOR ARNAUD ASKED CHI ABOUT DIPLOMATIC SPECULATION IN PEKING THAT HUA KUO-FENG'S APPOINTMENT AS ACTING PREMIER WAS TEMPORARY. CHI REPLIED THAT HUA WAS "PREMIER AD INTERIM" BUT
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THAT THE CHINESE TERM (TAI) CARRIED NO CONNOTATION OF PROVISIONAL.

ACTUALLY, CHI WENT ON, HUA HAD BEEN "OFFICIALLY NOMINATED" TO THE POST OF PREMIER (PRESUMABLY BY THE POLITBURO OR CENTRAL COMMITTEE) AND WAS AWAITING CONFIRMATION (PRESUMABLY BY THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS).

3. TENG HSIAO-PING. CHI CONFIRMED TO ARNAUD THAT TENG RETAINS HIS POSITION AS VICE PREMIER. HOWEVER, ON FEBRUARY 14 CCP STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBER CHANG CHUN-CHIAO REPORTEDLY ANSWERED A QUESTION FROM WEST GERMAN CDU VISITORS ALFRED DREGGER AND WERNER KARL MARX ON WHETHER THE POSTERS AT PEKING UNIVERSITY WERE AIMED AT TENG WITH THE POINTED STATEMENT, IF I WERE TO DEVIATE FROM CHAIRMAN MAO'S LINE, THE MASSES WOULD BRING ME DOWN" (FRG EMBASSY VERSION). THE MFA INFORMATION DEPARTMENT REPLIED LAST WEEKEND TO THE SAME QUESTION AFTER A COUPLE DAYS' DELAY WITH AN UNUSUAL "NO COMMENT." (NORMAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT PRACTICE IS TO AVOID ANY RESPONSE TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AND THE "NO COMMENT" IN THIS CONTEXT SEEMS TO BE A DEFINITE SLAP AT TENG.)

4. ANTI-TENG SLOGANS APPARENTLY WENT UP IN SHANGHAI SOMEWHAT EARLIER THAN IN PEKING. ACCORDING TO REPORTS RECEIVED HERE THIS WEEKEND, FUTAN UNIVERSITY HAS NUMEROUS POSTERS AND SLOGANS CRITICIZING "CAPITALIST ROADERS" AND THE "GREAT EVIL WIND" ARE OPENLY DISPLAYED IN SHANGHAI'S STREETS. ONE FOREIGN STUDENT SOURCE REPORTED THAT A POSTER HAD BEEN PUT UP AT FUTAN WHICH ATTACKED TENG DIRECTLY BY NAME BUT IT WAS QUICKLY TAKEN DOWN. ANOTHER FUTAN POSTER REFERRED TO "CHINA'S NEW SECOND KHRUSCHEV", AN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO TENG WHO WAS CALLED CHINA'S "NUMBER TWO CAPITALIST ROADER IN POWER" DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. (BOTH THE NUMBER ONE CAPITALIST ROADER AND THE MAN REGULARLY LABELED "CHINA'S KHRUSCHEV" WAS, OF COURSE, LIU SHAO-CHI.) ANOTHER POSTER CONTAINED THE UNUSUAL ACCUSATION THAT TENG (BY IMPLICATION, NOT NAME) HAD "OPPOSED CHAIRMAN MAO'S LINE THAT THE PARTY

SHOULD COMMAND THE ARMY."

5. A UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN DELEGATION SAW THE TSINGHAU UNIVERSITY POSTERS ON FEBRUARY 14 AND MET WITH A "LEADING MEMBER" OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION LIU AI-FENG THE SAME DAY BUT THEY REPORTED NO NEW THEMSE IN THE POSTERS AND WERE UNABLE TO DRAW OUT LIU ON THE STATUS OF THE MINISTRY OR LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS.

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6. CHANG PING-HUA IN HUNAN. THE BRITISH HAVE A RELIABLE REPORT THAT BY FEBRUARY 8 POSTERS WERE DISPLAYED IN DOWNTOWN CHANGSHA (WITH SOME SLOGANS STRUNG ACROSS THE MAIN ROAD) CALLING HUNAN FIRST VICE CHAIRMAN CHANG PING-HUA A "CAPITALIST ROADER". THE POSTERS CONTAIN PHRASEOLOGY FROM THE FEBRUARY 6 PEOPLE'S DAILY ARTICLE AND REFER TO CHANG'S HAVING MADE "HIS ATTITUDE KNOWN IN HIS DECEMBER 25 SPEECH."

7. CHEN HSI-LIEN. THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY HAS REPORTS THAT THE CRITICISM OF CHEN HSI-LIEN IN SHENYANG POSTERS (PREVIOUSLY REPORTED AS FIRST IN DECEMBER) HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR SIX MONTHS. THE CRITICISM IS APPARENTLY LIMITED TO CHEN'S HANDLING OF THE CASE OF THE JAILED RED GUARD FACTION LEADER WHOSE MOTHER IS SEEKING HIS RELEASE AND THE AUSTRALIANS CONSIDER IT LESS SERIOUS THAN THE CRITICISM LEVELED AGAINST MAO YUAN-HSIN FOR FACTIONALIST. (PEKING 41 AND 225.)

8. INFORMATION ON FRENCH MEETING WITH CHI TSUNG-HUA CAME FROM BRITISH EMBOFF AND MUST BE CONSIDERED SENSITIVE. SOURCING OF INFORMATION CONTAINED PARAS 6 AND 7 ALSO SENSITIVE AND SHOULD NOT BE INDICATED TO THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PEKING00256
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760058-0307
From: PEKING
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760245/aaaabnps.tel
Line Count: 130
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <31 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STATUS OF HUA KUO-FENG; CRITICISM OF OTHER PRC LEADERS
TAGS: PINT, CH, (HUA KUO-FENG), (TENG HSIAO-PING), (CHANG PING-HUA), (CHEN HSI-LIEN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006